

Biden, Castle Request Public Meeting in Delaware to discuss proposed electric transmission corridor -- May 17, 2007

WASHINGTON (May 17, 2007) - Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) and Congressman Michael Castle (R-DE) have joined dozens of their colleagues in urging Samuel Bodman, the U.S. Secretary of Energy, to hold meetings, providing the public with an opportunity to learn more about the recently proposed national interest electric transmission corridors.

In April, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced its proposal to create the Mid-Atlantic transmission corridor - one of only two in the nation - to address current and future electricity transmission congestion and constraint problems along portions of the east coast. Essentially, by creating the corridor, the DOE would have sole authority to implant transmission facilities like power lines, if they feel a state is not adequately addressing congestion concerns.

The Mid-Atlantic corridor would include all of Delaware and currently, no meetings are scheduled in Delaware for the public to learn about the proposal.

"The designation could have a major impact on Delaware and how transmission facilities and power lines are sited in the state," said Senator Biden. "In order to learn more about what these impacts might be the Department of Energy needs to provide an open and public forum for this discussion in Delaware. It is vital that Delaware's voices are heard before federal action of this magnitude is taken."

"While the Department of Energy is understandably trying to create viable solutions to the problem of electricity transmission congestion, a proposal of this scale demands the attention and thoughts of all those who will be affected," said Congressman Castle. "I will continue to push for public meetings, so Delawareans can get their questions answered and voice their views before the plan is implemented."

The comment period on this proposal is scheduled to end July 6, 2007. There have only been seven public meetings scheduled for the entire proposed corridor, and none are slated to be in Delaware. Senator Biden and Congressman Castle are requesting that the DOE schedule a meeting in Delaware and extend the comment period an additional 30 days to not only allow the public to become educated on the project, but also to give them ample time to provide comments on it.

The letter is printed below:

May 15, 2007

The Honorable Samuel Bodman

Secretary, Department of Energy

1000 Independence Ave SW

Washington DC 20585

Dear Secretary Bodman:

We write today to express our concerns about the proposed schedule of the public comment meetings with respect to the recently issued draft National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors pursuant to Section 1221 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The draft Mid-Atlantic corridors alone affect the homes of almost 50 million Americans and over 116,627 square miles. The Department of Energy's intent was to hold just three public meetings, now there are seven, but this is still unacceptable.

Federal action of this magnitude absolutely must allow adequate input by interested homeowners, community groups, utilities commissions and government officials at all levels. Holding just seven public meetings in the middle of the work week simply does not accommodate the rights of American citizens to have their voice heard by federal officials. Our constituents will be directly affected by this federal decision. Yet some would be required to drive up to 6 hours to attend a hearing being held in the middle of the week with only two weeks notice.

As the members of Congress representing the affected constituents, we feel the Department of Energy should hold a public meeting in every congressional district during evening hours when our constituents will be able to attend. Our constituents must have a full and adequate opportunity to be heard.

Due to the constricted time frame of the comment period, we urge you to extend the comment period for at least an additional 30 days to allow the department to conduct an adequate number of public meetings. Additionally, notice of these public meetings should be published in the newspaper of record in each affected county at least two weeks prior to the meeting date.

Thank you for taking steps to assure that the voices of our constituents will be heard.

Best wishes.

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